# ealthy Weigh Promoting

The Problem

Many young children, adolescents and young adults in North Dakota are overweight because today's lifestyles promote poor eating habits and physical inactivity. In order for our youth to become healthy adults, prevention activities must make it easier for them to choose nutritious foods and to be more physically active.







## North Dakota Statistics ~ 1999

- Only 45 percent of young adults ages 20 to 24 had a body mass index (BMI) of 20 to 24.9, considered to be a healthy weight.
- About 20 percent of teens were overweight or were at risk of becoming overweight (greater than the 85th percentile BMI); in contrast, more than 40 percent of teen girls thought they were overweight and more than 60 percent were trying to lose weight. A perception of being overweight and dieting to lose weight put many teens at risk of developing eating disorders.
- About 8 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in the WIC program were overweight (greater than the 95th percentile in weight for height). Between 1993 and 1999, the percentage of overweight 3- and 4-year-olds was almost double for American Indian children as for White children.

# 5 Plus 5 Communities

5 Plus 5
Communities work to encourage North Dakotans to eat more fruits and vegetables – five servings a day – and to increase physical activity – 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

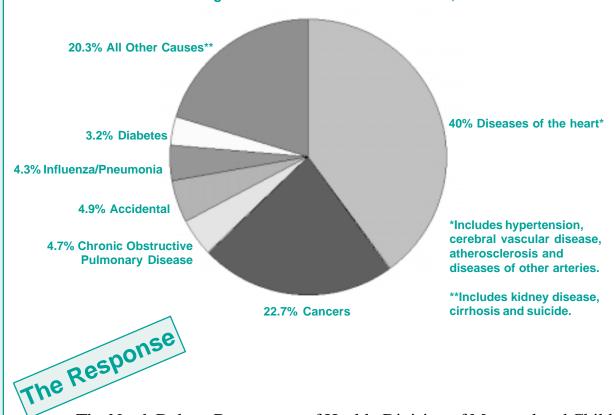
### Data Sources:

- Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

# The Effects

Improper eating habits, physical inactivity and being overweight lead to increased risk of heart disease, some types of cancer, stroke, type 2 diabetes and atherosclerosis. An unhealthy weight – weighing too little or too much – can affect reproductive outcomes for women.

### Leading Causes of Death in North Dakota, 1998



The North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health, promotes healthy weight through a number of collaborative activities. An MCH staff member leads the Obesity Prevention Work Group (OPWG), comprised of programs from several public and private agencies. Among its many activities, the OPWG sponsors conferences – such as the May 2001 conference Eat Well, Play More: Promoting Healthy Weight in North Dakota Children. MCH supports the development of 5 Plus 5 Communities through the North Dakota Healthy Heart Council (see sidebar). In addition, staff members from the Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC Program) promote behaviors that prevent obesity.



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